

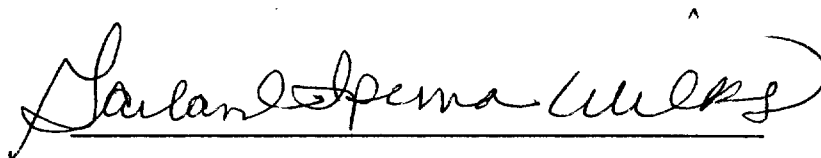
**A Public Relations Case Study:  
The Realignment of Grissom Air Force Base,  
Indiana**

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Wendi S. Blackburn

Thesis Advisor  
Gardi Ipema Wilks

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Gardi Ipema Wilks", is written over a horizontal line.

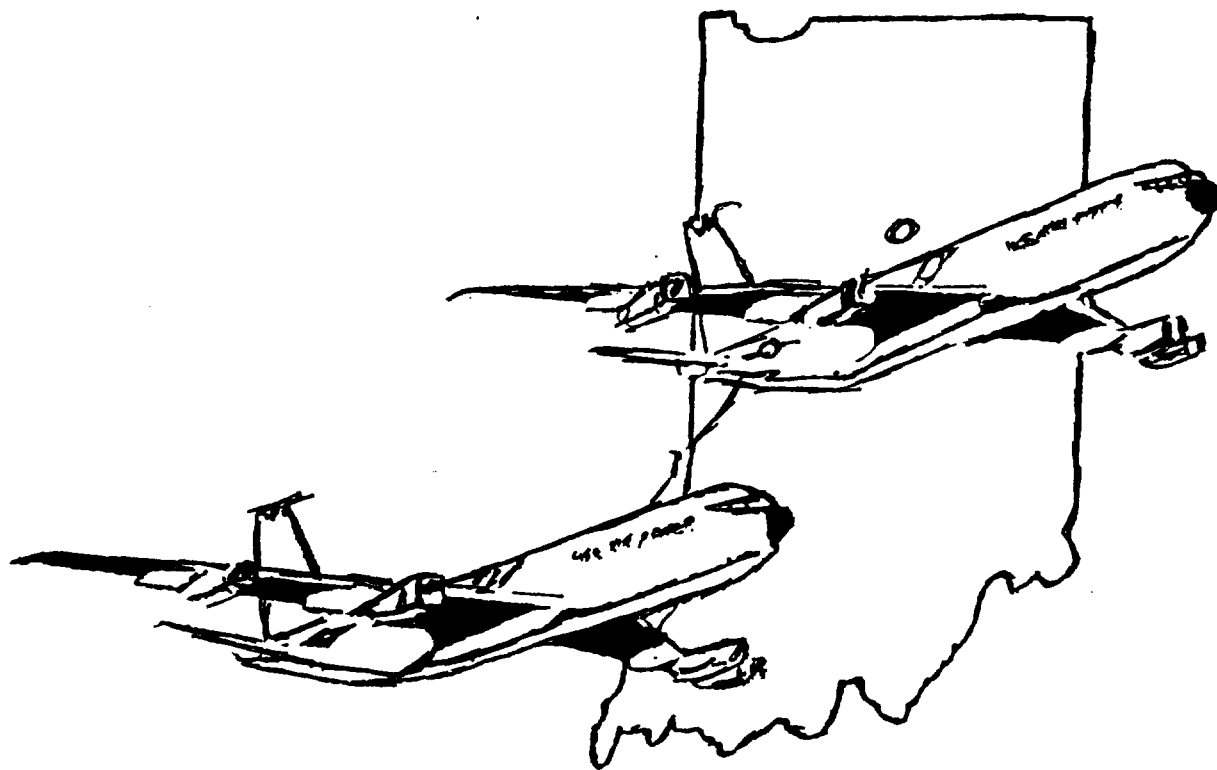
Ball State University  
Muncie, Indiana  
December, 1992

Expected graduation date: December 20, 1992

7-16  
7-16  
LD  
1-1  
=4  
-12  
BSS

# *GRISSOM*

## *AIR FORCE BASE*



# Table of Contents

Purpose of Thesis	1
Introduction	2-3
Problem Statement	3-4
Background Information	4-16
Footnotes	17-19
Research Methods/Bibliography	20-23
Goals and Objectives	24-25
Target Publics and Message Statements	26-29
Proactive Two-Year Plan	30-42
Addendum 1	43-44
Addendum 2	45
Evaluation.	46-47
Summary	48-49

## Supplementary Material

1. Air Force Vision Statement
2. Graphic Representations of Data
3. Military Family Questionnaire
4. Chain of Command Flow of Information
5. Media List
6. News Release
7. Information to be Included in *Pacesetter* Column
8. Q-&-A for Phone Conversations
9. News Conference Materials
10. Commander's Call Talking Points
11. "Grissom This Week" Script
12. Community Leaders Newsletter
13. Quality of Life Survey
14. Task Force
15. Focus Group Guidelines
16. Parent Education Program Materials
17. Civilian Call Talking Points
18. Personnel Questionnaire

# Purpose of Thesis

This public relations case study focuses on the realignment and closure of military installations; Grissom Air Force Base, Indiana, in particular. Along with background information, the case study includes samples of actual public relations tools to be utilized in the program. This case study serves as a guide in maintaining proactive public relations between the base and its pertinent publics as well as stressing the importance of open, bilateral communication in crisis and complex situations.

# Introduction

Military personnel and their dependents are America's vagabonds.

They move across the globe from community to community without establishing strong roots. Due to their mobile nature, America's military families anchor their roots in their family relationships. These families learn to appreciate each new community and military base they are assigned to. In a short amount of time, military personnel and dependents feel at home in their new community -- at least until the winds of change blow again.

Civilian communities surrounding these military installations thrive on the nearby base. After all, military personnel possess discretionary incomes (money available after paying taxes and buying necessities) which have a positive effect on the economies of local communities. Members of military bases also provide philanthropic services and support to the local communities, such as collecting food for the needy.

The presence of military installations is key to the survival of more than 90 communities in the United States. As a result, the announcement of the closures of 120 military installations since 1988 is having a resounding impact not only on the military personnel involved, but on the surrounding communities as well.

Economic aid and reforms have been proposed to help these communities. However, research indicates that the free flow of communication either does not exist or is not targeting the pertinent information to the proper target audiences in these communities. As a result, misunderstandings and rumors abound. The

truth needs to get out to the proper publics in the most efficient manner possible.

A proactive public relations program focused on Grissom, in particular, is the most effective choice in facing the impending realignment. The program could be expanded, as well, to target military installations across the nation facing similar realignment or closure circumstances. □

## Problem Statement

Grissom Air Force Base, Indiana, and the surrounding communities of Peru, Kokomo, and Logansport are prime examples of the effects of imminent military base realignments or base closures.

The Cold War and the threat of communism have dissipated, thereby reducing the need for such an extensive American military force. The fraying of both the global and American economy is yet another factor in the closing and/or realignment of military bases.

As the social and economic makeup of America falls apart, the residents of and around Grissom are struggling to know in which direction to go with their lives.

True, Grissom will realign from an active-duty Air Force installation to a reserve one by October 1994, one and no one can halt the process. However, an effective public relations program can make the transition easier on both the residents of Grissom and those of the surrounding communities by maintaining a two-way free flow of communication and squelching any rumors. This

comprehensive public relations program should be planned, implemented, and evaluated with the best interests of the numerous publics affected in mind.

The key goal of the proposed public relations program is to allay the fears of those affected while reaching the greatest number of people with the necessary information. The proposed program will facilitate positive relationships between Grissom and the affected communities by enhancing existing communication programs as well as initiating new ones. It will also focus on deflecting any negative feelings which may arise during the realignment and conversion processes. The program will focus on easing the impact of the realignment psychologically as well as financially.□

## Background Information

In order to comprehend the significance of the upcoming realignment of Grissom Air Force Base, it is important to understand:

- the lifestyle of the military family
- the factors provoking the down-sizing of the U.S. military
- the role and impact of Grissom in the local communities.

## THE LIFESTYLE OF THE MILITARY FAMILY

"In some deep and emotional way, a family gives us a sense of our past...and in ways that are tragic and heartfelt, funny and silly, a family gives us a sense of belonging..."

--"The American Family," *Life*, June 1, 1992

The family, for military personnel and dependents, is the mainstay of their existence. While civilian families have the opportunity to live in one community for the majority of their lives, military families usually depend totally on themselves due to their mobile lifestyles. According to Gary Bowen and Dennis Orthner's *The Organization Family: Work and Family Linkages in the United States Military*, "Service in the armed forces involves more than an occupational choice; it's the selection of a lifestyle that permeates almost every aspect of a person's life."<sup>1</sup>

Very few other occupations require the dedication and commitments required of military members. The military work mission includes, but is not limited to: long work hours, high-stress assignments, required relocations, frequent family separations, remote tours, and frequent subservience to family needs in order to fulfill the mission.

SSgt. Kathy Gandara, Grissom Air Force Base Public Affairs Office NonCommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC), said, "A military career is 24 hours a day for both the military member and their family. It's not something that you just do -- you live it in so many ways. The military is a microcosm and



these people have been isolated from the real world in many ways..."<sup>2</sup>

According to 1st Lieutenant Shirley Eubanks, Grissom Deputy Chief of Public Affairs, "As a single person in the military, I find my role harder than that of a civilian single person in the sense that the military requires a unique commitment which isn't limited to set hours and tasks. The needs of the military<sup>3</sup> always take precedence over the desires and priorities of the individual."

Military families must undergo behavioral adaptation due to the demands of the military. Children must adapt the mobile lifestyle and develop means to cope with the continual change. Deall said that the average military family moves every two to four years. Dependent children attend anywhere between two to eight schools due to their mobile childhoods.<sup>4</sup>

Bowen and Orthner concur that geographic mobility disrupts family life and requires adjustments under every circumstance. "One of the most unstable aspects<sup>5</sup> of growing up in an organization family is moving..."

Capt. Tom Deall, Grissom Air Force Base Chief Public Affairs Officer, said that there are several benefits as well as hardships experienced by military families as compared to civilian families. The benefits include: having the opportunity to travel the world, receiving priceless training, and working with the country's best personnel. The hardships include: having to say many more good-byes, the necessity to establish relationships quickly, sprouting very short roots (especially in<sup>6</sup> children), and the absence of a support network.

Those people who grow up as military dependents tend to collect

acquaintances but not close friendships. Due to their mobile lifestyles, military dependents tend to possess fewer social relationships but tighter family bonds as compared to civilian children.<sup>7</sup>

Combining all branches of the United States military, more than two million people are involved in active duty service. Spouses, children, and family members account for more than three million other people affected by the mobile military lifestyle. Thus, more than five million Americans are products of the mobile military way of life and will, in some way or another, be affected by the closures and realignments of the military installations.

According to Gandara, "The hardest thing about being a military family is the struggle with loyalty to the military and to your family simultaneously.

"Sometimes being a military parent is harder because the things a child does directly reflect on the parent ten-fold. Your children and their behavior can, in some instances, make or break your military career."<sup>8</sup>

Deall said the hardest thing about being a military family is, "...adjusting to the military's needs. Long term planning becomes a chore, if not impossible, and just when you think you've got the system figured out, the service's needs change.

"It's hard to explain to kids that they have to say good-bye again. I fear my kids will not know how to develop roots and after a few years will have the need to leave ..."<sup>9</sup>

## FACTORS PROVOKING THE DOWN-SIZING OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY

"We shall bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty."

--President John F. Kennedy

The April 1991 *Department of Defense Report Base Closure and Realignment Report* states that, "The Department of Defense is downsizing and reshaping its military forces to adapt to changes in the strategic environment and to meet the challenges and opportunities of the post-Cold War era."<sup>10</sup>

The collapse of communism, the demise of the Warsaw Pact, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, the reshaping of American-Soviet relationships, and the disbandment of the Russian empire have led to a redefinition of America's global stance and role. In addition, arms reduction agreements have called for a large-scale curtailment in America's military force.

According to Gandara, "There's no doubt with the changing world climate that the military takes on a different role...and should be reduced. But the impending drawdown is putting a Band-aid on a much bigger ailment. Let's get rid of the dead weight by weeding them out over a reasonable period of time. Let's really do more than talk about quality force; let's make it the standard. In the rush to assuage public opinion and government account books, the result is a less than<sup>11</sup> quality military force."

On November 5, 1990, President George Bush signed Public Law 101-510, Title XXIX -- the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act, which established a

committee, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, to select bases that were no longer necessary to fulfill the revised military mission. Grissom Air Force Base was cited as one such base along with 47 other military installations.

In 1991, President Bush proposed a \$50 billion defense cut. Along those lines, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission stated that getting rid of unnecessary facilities is imperative so that limited funds can go to vital  
12  
military needs.

According to the *Air Force Issues Book*, 1992, "We're not paring down. We are building a new smaller Air Force from the ground up. This reshaping and restructuring has been driven by the demands of a new era -- new thinking, new  
13  
security challenges, and new technology."

The military comprises less than 19% of the federal budget. However, Deall said, the politicians seem to think that by cutting the defense budget the country's  
14  
monetary woes can finally be solved.

The costs to implement the reduction in force recommendations between 1992-1997 is \$5.7 billion. The total savings expected between 1992 and 1997 is \$6.5 billion. By fiscal year 1995, the number of active duty personnel will have been  
15  
decreased by 102,000.

The 1991 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission's Report to the President stated that each of the installations recommended for closure enjoys a proud history of service to the United States. Moreover, the report recognizes that  
16  
base closure creates economic hardship that only time and initiative can overcome.

Criteria for selecting the bases for closure and realignment were established by

the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission. The criteria are:

1. Current and future mission requirements and the impact on operational readiness of the Department of Defense's total force
2. Availability and condition of land, facilities, and associated air space at existing and potential receiving locations
3. Ability to accommodate contingency, mobilization, and future Total Force requirements at existing and potential receiving locations
4. Cost and manpower implications
5. Extent and timing of potential costs and savings including number of years beginning with the date of completion of closure/realignment for savings to exceed the cost
6. Economic impact on communities
7. Ability of existing and potential receiving communities' infrastructure to support forces, missions, and personnel
8. Environmental impact.

## **ROLE AND IMPACT OF GRISSOM ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

According to the *April 1991 Department of Defense Base Closure and Realignment Report*, "The closure of Grissom Air Force Base will have an impact on the local economy. It is projected to result in a population loss of approximately 9,700 persons, a direct and indirect loss of just over 5,200 jobs, and regional income loss of nearly \$88 million."<sup>17</sup>

There are 2,497 active duty members assigned to Grissom and 807 civilians employed there in one capacity or another. Overall, 3,304 jobs will be affected by the realignment. Despite these figures, the Base Closure and Realignment Commission cited that Grissom would be the fourth lowest base to close in terms of financial cost.<sup>18</sup>

For a breakdown of Grissom military and civilian personnel and the effects on Peru, Kokomo, and Logansport, see **Supplement #2**. These piecharts visually depict the impact the realignment will have on the local communities. More than 15,000 base personnel reside in the Tri-County area alone. The distribution is as follows:

<u>"Group"</u>	<u># of people</u>
Military .....	2,365
Civilians .....	1,595
Retirees .....	5,515
Dependents .....	3,608
Reserve Forces .....	1,923

The graphs clearly illustrate that the conversion will greatly affect the nearby communities in several ways, including population loss, worsened economy, and lower school enrollments. According to the Kokomo Development Corporation,<sup>19</sup> the Grissom members' average propensity to consume is \$13,878,119.19.

Grissom possesses 3,181 acres of land, of which 12,500 feet are active runways and 3,900 feet comprise inactive runways. The total contonement area, the area to be redeveloped, is 1,174 acres.

According to Ralph Duckwall, president of the Peru Chamber of Commerce, "We are, of course, concerned as to what the forthcoming changes will do to our local economy. Some small businesses have already begun to feel the effects of reductions which have already taken place on base. The short term outlook is not as optimistic as what we expect to gain over the long term. There is an old saying,<sup>20</sup> 'Time heals all wounds,' and I believe that also applies to us."

The local Maconaquah school corporation is also feeling the effects of the

realignment and conversion. Ronald Wilson, superintendent of the Maconaquah School Corporation, said, "...the number of students coming from military families (in the Maconaquah school system) is approximately 1,101 out of 2,707 or 40%. You can see the impact will be great." <sup>21</sup> The Maconaquah school system also faces a potential loss of 100 staff members as well as a potential loss of \$3 million. The school corporation will be downsized by one-third once the Grissom realignment process is complete. <sup>22</sup> See Supplement #2.

## REALIGNMENT EFFORTS AND GRISSOM CLOSURE

The realignment or closure of any military installation is no easy feat. The 1991 Department of Defense's Base Closure and Realignment Report says, "Closing <sup>23</sup> military bases is difficult, especially for the communities affected."

The federal government has initiated several programs to make the conversion process easier. One such program focuses on the Office of Economic Adjustment, which helps local communities plan for the reuse of closing and realigning installations.

According to Public Law 101-510, Title XXIX, Section 2905 a.)B, the Secretary of Defense can provide aid to local communities under two circumstances:

- 1.) Economic adjustment assistance can be provided for any community near a military installation being closed or realigned
- 2.) Community planning assistance is available to any community near a military installation to which functions will be transferred due to the closing or realignment. <sup>24</sup>

According to Lt. Col. Mike Moran, Grissom Closure and Realignment

Executive officer, "As with any process, communication is the key to success. From the beginning, we realized that to successfully realign Grissom, we need the

25

cooperation of the whole base..."

The realignment at Grissom will undergo four phases, as outlined below:

- I. Planning/Implementation Phase
  - Began when the announcement to realign was made (April 1992)
  - Ends when the planes begin departing in October of 1992
- II. Inactivation Phase
  - October 1, 1992--December 31, 1993
- III. Realignment Phase
  - January 1, 1994--September 30, 1994
  - All active duty missions and people should be gone
- IV. Caretaker Phase
  - For five years after the active duty departs
  - Ensure the new "owners" are settled in without any problems

According to Moran, "One of our biggest problems has been the information flow from units above Grissom ... We could not get an answer about anything.

There was no direction. So we worked in a vacuum, hoping we weren't wasting time."

26

Despite the restricted working conditions, Grissom's Closure and Realignment Execution (CARE) office has implemented several programs, including:

- A committee, Closure/Realignment Offices of Primary Responsibility (CROPRs), has been founded composed of all key units on Grissom
- Crossfeed: communication with other bases in the same situation
- Visits to closure bases



- Distribution of workbooks through CROPRs
  - Workbook 1--Base property to be inventoried
  - Workbook 2--Personnel questions
- Currently creating a base plan detailing how expect things to happen
- Use of Quality Management approach -- decision-making at the lowest level
- Dealing with external entities such as the Grissom Community Redevelopment Authority (GCRA)
  - focuses on such issues as property and equipment
- Dealing with dependents on base
  - town meeting
  - Pacesetter* (weekly newspaper)
    - an article at least every 3 weeks

According to Moran, "As someone once said, 'Believe me here and believe me now.' Realignment is fast approaching.

27

"Everytime I write an article I say that, but not everyone believes it.

"There are times when we can't tell what we know when we learn it.

28

As soon as we can release it -- we do."

Although Grissom's CARE office has been active, "...the single most important factor in whether a conversion succeeds ... is local initiative ... the better programs were the ones where there was a more vigorous local endeavor."

29

As such, it is imperative that Grissom and the surrounding communities of Peru, Kokomo, and Logansport work hand in hand during this process. Open communication is the best means of diminishing any negative effects of the conversion process.

The role of public relations/affairs is extremely important in including the local communities in the conversion process. Dean Kruckeburg, author of *Public*

*Relations and Community: A Reconstructed Theory* , said, "Public relations ... shouldn't be viewed as a means of 'us' -- communications specialists -- simply doing something to 'them' -- targeted publics. Instead, those responsible for public relations should approach communication as a complex, multifold process with the potential to help create a sense of community."<sup>30</sup>

The proposed public relations program for military installation closures and conversions is one which focuses on proactive communication for residents of Grissom and for those of the local communities.

As Col. Marc L. Drinkhahn, Grissom's 305th Air Refueling Wing commander, said, "People are the connection between teamwork and mission. They're the heart of all we do."<sup>31</sup>

Deall said, "The government needs to remember that every number they discussed has a face."<sup>32</sup>

The local communities will be involved in the communication program via focus groups, surveys, newsletters, and briefings. One-on-one interviews will be utilized between Lt. Col. Mike Moran, CARE chief, and business leaders affected by the realignment.

Grissom and the surrounding communities have utilized several communications strategies. Briefings for local dignitaries as well as town meetings have been held to generate information feedback.

However, different groups of people need to be targeted. Numerous publics are affected by this situation. As a result, a highly effective program needs to be planned and implemented, putting the pieces of the realignment puzzle together.

It is, after all, America's military men and women who have fought for the inalienable rights modern society takes for granted. The residents of and around Grissom have the right and the need for two-way flow of communication, which is the aim of this proposed public relations program.□

# Footnotes

1

Gary Bowen and Dennis Orthner (eds.), *The Organization Family: Work and Family Linkages in the United States Military* (New York: Prager Publishers, 1989) xiii.

2

Military Family Questionnaire (MFQ) from SSgt. Kathy Gandara, Grissom Public Affairs NCOIC, July 8, 1992.

3

MFQ from 1st Lt. Shirley Eubanks, Grissom Public Affairs Deputy Chief, Sept. 4, 1992.

4

MFQ from Capt. Tom Deall, Grissom Public Affairs Chief, Aug. 27, 1992.

5

Bowen, 123.

6

Deall (MFQ).

7

Bowen, 123.

8

Gandara (MFQ).

9

Deall (MFQ).

10

U.S. Department of Defense, Base Closure and Realignment Commission, *April 1991 Base Closure and Realignment Report* (Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1991).

11

Gandara (MFQ).

12

U.S. Department of Defense, Base Closure and Realignment Commission, *Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission: Report to the President, 1991*

(Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1991) .

13

U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force, *Air Force Issues Book* (Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1992), 1.

14

Deall (MFQ).

15

*Department of Defense Closure and Realignment Report.*

16

*Ibid.*, introduction.

17

*Ibid.*, 99.

18

*Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission: Report to the President*, 5-36.

19

Kokomo Development Corporation's information package.

20

Letter from Ralph Duckwall to Wendi Blackburn, Sept. 10, 1992.

21

Letter from Ronald Wilson to Wendi Blackburn, Sept. 11, 1992.

22

Maconaquah School Corporation Crisis Management Report, 1991-1992, 1.

23

*Department of Defense Base Closure and Realignment Report*, 5.

24

Public Law 101-510, Nov. 5, 1990 Title XXIX Sec. 2905 a.)B.

25

Letter from Lt. Col. Mike Moran to Wendi Blackburn, Sept. 1, 1992.

26

*Ibid.*

27

Lt. Col. Mike Moran, "CARE picks up how-to tips during recent base visits," *Pacesetter*, August 28, 1992.

28

Moran.

29

Kathleen Sylvester, "What to do when Your Local Military Base Makes the Pentagon Hit List," *Governing*, Nov. 1988, 23.

30

Dean Kruckeburg and Kenneth Starck, *Public Relations and Community: A Reconstructed Theory* (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1988) xiii.

31

Grissom Air Force Base Civilian Call, June 3, 1992.

32

Deall (MFQ).

# Research Methods

Research is a significant factor in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of any public relations program. Via research, the needs of the target publics can be discovered and thus acted on, providing the customer (the residents of and around Grissom) with the desired product (information).

I interviewed several key officials, civilians, and dependents involved in and affected by this situation through informal person-to-person interviews as well as through phone interviews. One-on-one primary research is the most effective means for getting to the bottom of the issue; it gets to the depth and emotion secondary research can't fully discover.

A second means of research utilized in forming the basis of this program is a questionnaire (See **Supplement #3**). Once again, going to the people involved and affected is the most precise means of uncovering the target publics' needs. The questionnaire was given to six military personnel at Grissom. Each person the questionnaire was given to had a unique family situation as compared to the others. The breakdown of those interviewed is as follows:

1. A "traditional" military family with the husband as the military member, a wife, and four children
2. Wife as military member, husband with own business, 1 child
3. Single female, new to the Air Force (under a year)
4. Divorced male military member with 2 children
5. Single female been in Air Force for 6 years
6. Husband and wife both in the service, 1 child.

The questionnaire was given in this manner in order to develop the best overall picture of the life of the military family as well as how the realignment would affect that structure.

Secondary research was also helpful in the development of this program. This research included case studies, public laws, newspaper clippings, books, and reports from the Department of Defense.

I also wrote letters to the chiefs of Public Affairs at 11 Air Force installations slated to close between 1992-1994. The correspondence from these bases was an immense insight into obtaining proper perspective for this proposed program.

I was unable to find very much published information on military life, the closing of military installations, or the public relations aspect of communicating with the residents of local communities as well as with military personnel during a phasing-out program. The vast majority of my research is primary research provided by the Department of Defense, military personnel, and civilian leaders in the nearby communities.□



# Bibliography

*A Day in the Life of the United States Military*, Army Times Special Edition, 1992.

Air Force Issues Book, 1992.

"The American Family," *Life*, June 1, 1992.

Biggerstaff, Jim, Myrtle Beach Air Force Base, SC, Public Affairs . Phone interview by Wendi Blackburn. Sept. 9, 1992.

Bowen, Gary and Dennis Orthner. *The Organization Family: Work and Family Linkages in the United States Military*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989.

Department of Defense, Base Closure and Realignment Commission, *April 1991 Base Closure and Realignment Report*. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991.

Department of Defense, Base Closure and Realignment Commission, *Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission: Report to the President*, 1991. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991.

Duckwall, Ralph. Personal letter to Wendi Blackburn. Sept. 10, 1992.

Grissom Air Force Base Closure and Realignment Briefing. July 23, 1992.

Groppe, Maureen. "Opinion Mixed on Blame for Grissom Closure." *Kokomo Tribune*. August 18, 1991: 5.

Hendrix, Jerry A. *Public Relations Cases*. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988.

Kruckeburg, Dean and Kenneth Starck. *Public Relations and Community: A Reconstructed Theory*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988.

Kokomo Development Corporation Information Kit, 1992.

La Rue-Musgrave, Nori. Personal letter to Wendi Blackburn. Sept. 15, 1992.

Lewis, Karen. Personal letter to Wendi Blackburn. Sept. 23, 1992.

Mc Peak, Merrill A. "McPeak: No clear mission statement, until now." *Air Force Times*. August 3, 1992: 4.

Maconaquah School Board Crisis Management Plan. April 12, 1991.

Maconaquah School Board Minutes. 1991-1992.

Military Family Questionnaire results: Tom Deall, Shirley Eubanks, Kathy Gandara.

Moran, Michael. "CARE picks up how-to tips during recent base visits." *Pacesetter*. August 28, 1992.

Moran, Michael. Personal letter to Wendi Blackburn. Sept. 1, 1992.

Philpott, Tom. "Moving On." *Air Force Times*. June 22, 1992: 12.

Public Law 101-510 -- Nov. 5, 1990: Title XXIX Sec. 2905 a.)B

Rodgers, Kathleen. "When planes stop and bases close will hurt most." *Air Force Times*, July 16, 1992: 29.

Tillis, John. Personal letter to Wendi Blackburn. Sept. 16, 1992.

Wilson, Ronald. Personal letter to Wendi Blackburn. Sept. 11, 1992.

# Goals and Objectives

- Goal 1:** To plan/establish open communication between residents of Grissom and the management/administration by 100%
- Objective 1:** A column in the *Pacesetter* (weekly newspaper) containing information and tips pertaining to the conversion
- Objective 2:** To plan and implement a parent education program with tips on how to make the entire conversion process easier and what help is available on base for dependent children
- Objective 3:** To create a series (3) of brochures with coping tips
- Objective 4:** Bimonthly focus on "Grissom This Week," the base closed-circuit television show, on the conversion process
- Goal 2:** To plan and establish a two-way flow of communication between Grissom and the target publics in the surrounding communities
- Objective 1:** To develop news releases on a regular basis, probably 2 times a month, to send to the local media
- Objective 2:** To plan and implement 3 briefings a year for local dignitaries
- Objective 3:** To design and create a bimonthly newsletter to send to community and business leaders
- Objective 4:** Monthly Community Council dinners--the focus of these dinners IS NOT the realignment but maintaining congenial relationships between officials of Grissom and the local communities  
--The agenda of the Community Council has always been focused on open relations between Logansport, Kokomo, Peru, and Grissom. At the beginning of each dinner, the chairperson from each community delivers a report on that community's current happenings. It is at this time that Drinkhahn will deliver the realignment update. A guest speaker, talking about current issues, is invited to the majority of the dinners and will serve as the keynote speaker.

**Goal 3:** To work with government/state officials and local businesses in keeping the flow of communication open

**Objective 1:** To write letters to mayors/local businesses informing them of the status of the conversion

**Objective 2:** To provide 100% more information to officials to aid their planning efforts as well as to maintain pertinent feedback

**Goal 4:** A proactive public relations press kit commemorating Grissom Air Force Base and the men and women who serve(d) there

**Goal 5:** To increase the overall personnel morale at Grissom

**Objective 1:** To ensure downward and upward communication between all offices at Grissom

**Objective 2:** Establish a suggestion program centrally focused on the conversion process and what can be done to make it easier

**Goal 6:** To work with existing realignment communications programs and support any programs local officials are implementing to deal with the conversion□

# Target Publics and Message Statements

According to Jerry A. Henrix, author of *Public Relations Cases*, "...Public Affairs concentrates on problem assessment through issues management and on identifying and understanding target audiences."

## **□Public #1: Military personnel stationed at Grissom**

The personnel stationed at Grissom should be the first link in the chain of communication pertaining to the realignment process. After all, their lives are the ones most readily and directly affected by the situation.

According to Col. Marc L. Drinkhahn, Grissom's 305th Air Refueling Wing commander, "People are the connection between teamwork and mission. They're the heart of all we do."

The Public Affairs Office at Grissom A.F.B. will openly communicate with all personnel stationed on the base. As Moran said, there are times when information cannot be immediately released. However, it is critical that information is communicated to military personnel as soon as it is releasable.

The main tool of communication used to reach this public are the chain of command flow of information (See Supplement #4), the base newspaper, and the base television show.

## **Message Statement #1:**

"The administration at Grissom wants to ensure you get as much information as possible as soon as possible to make the conversion process easier."

**□Public #2: Military families and dependents**

The families and dependents of military personnel are affected by the demands of the military almost as much as the military member is. As a matter of fact, in some instances these demands have a more impacting effect on dependents, especially on the dependent children. During a time of uncertainty and change, this public wants to feel reassured. It is important to provide them with as much information as possible in order to allay their fears. Throughout the entirety of the conversion process, the administration at Grissom will maintain honest, open communication with the families.

The main communication tools utilized to reach this public are the base newspaper, brochures, television show, and special programming/events.

**Message Statement #2:**

"The Grissom command section realizes the conversion process is especially hard on the families. We will do whatever is in our power to make this time easier on them by earnestly striving to provide as much information as possible as soon as possible."

**□Public #3: Local communities (Peru, Kokomo, Logansport)**

The realignment of Grissom Air Force Base will have a profound impact on the surrounding communities of Peru, Kokomo, and Logansport. To ease this impact, open communication will be facilitated with those communities. News releases and a prerecorded message will be the main tools utilized in reaching this public.

**Message Statement #3:**

"Since the beginning of Grissom's existence, we have had a 'good neighbor' relationship with you, the local communities. As we begin to phase down and convert to a reserve installation, we will use our every best effort to maintain our 'good neighbor' relationship. During this phase, the Grissom administration will act in the best interests of the civilian communities as well as of the military personnel stationed at Grissom."

**□Public #4: Media**

The media will prove to be a beneficial tool in implementing this public relations program. Media speculation can be answered, within the bounds of security via news releases and personal interviews as scheduled through the Grissom Public Affairs Office.

**Message Statement #4:**

"The Grissom Public Affairs Office will proactively keep you informed as the situation warrants. As much information that can be released will be released to you as soon as possible."

**□Public #5: Federal government**

The Department of Defense is an integral part of the United States government. As such, it is important that closure and realignment bases keep the government abreast of their situation. This is the first time in the history of the United States that such a mass base closure/conversion has been slated. As such, the government has a vested interest.

The most effective communication tools to reach this target public are news releases and/or personal letters.

**Message Statement #5:**

"Grissom Air Force Base, as a Department of Defense installation, will seek advice from and follow the guidelines of the United States government during this conversion phase. The base administration/management hopes to establish a program that can be used by other installations in the same or comparable situation."

**□Public #6: The United States Air Force**

As an Air Force installation, Grissom crossfeeds with other Air Force installations. It is important to keep Air Mobility Command headquarters aware of the conversion situation/process as well as helping other bases undergoing similar circumstances informed.

The most effective communication tools to be utilized in reaching this target public are news releases and the use of the Air Force Newswire.

*Message Statement #6:*

"The administration at Grissom Air Force Base wants to keep other Air Force installations aware of the conversion process so they can learn from it, as it ultimately affects them."

☐ *Public #7: General public*

Concern more than likely will be raised within the general public pertaining to the realignment process. To most effectively inform this public, news releases are the best bet. The recorded message is also an effective tool.

*Message Statement #7:*

"The administration at Grissom Air Force Base is aware of the public's interest in the conversion process. As such, we promise to inform the general public as much and as quickly as possible." ☐



# Proactive Two-Year Plan

The following proactive public relations plan is one which can be sped up or slowed down depending on the circumstances. This plan is written with Grissom's tentative realignment date of October 1, 1994, in mind. It is important during this conversion process to cultivate positive morale within all targeted publics and supply them with as much information as possible. The second key thing to remember is that this plan should also focus on effectively marketing the contonement area to potential owners. This plan is mainly concerned with the future of the personnel and communities involved.

## Year 1

### January

- Create a media list with pertinent media to be reached during the conversion process (See Supplement #5)
- Grissom will begin its proactive communications program through the media by sending a press release to all media on the media list informing them of the conversion, how it will be implemented, and its effect on the surrounding communities (See Supplement #6)
- Establish a column in the *Pacesetter* with realignment updates and tips (See Supplement #7)
- Letters to Congressmen, mayors, and chambers of commerce
- Develop a Q-&-A for phone calls pertaining to the conversion (See Supplement #8)
- A base town meeting will be held by Col. Marc L. Drinkhahn, 305th Air Refueling Wing commander. It will be open to military personnel and dependents and will focus on the realignment
- Plan monthly Community Council dinner. Drinkhahn will say a few words to the Council members about the realignment but WILL NOT be the keynote speaker
- Develop Closure and Realignment Execution (CARE) office to begin working with the federal government, Grissom, local communities, the Reserve Wing, and prospective owners

• Establish an information network between Grissom's command section/administration and the military personnel

• News conference (**See Supplement #9**)

- Drinkhahn will be speaking
- Q-and-A
- Talking points
- Media advisory
- Site reserved and set up
- Media passes
- Work with security
- RSVPs necessary -- invites

• Commander's Call with military personnel (**See Supplement #10**)

- Drinkhahn -- speaker
- Q-and-A
- Talking points
- Site reserved

## February

• At least once this month send a news release to the media on the media list pertaining to the conversion

• Continue weekly column in the *Pacesetter*

• Obtain an answering machine and record a message and reserve a phoneline for use only for the conversion process. When is completely established -- release the phone number to the pertinent publics

• Plan monthly Community Council dinner. Once again, the focus of the dinner IS NOT the conversion. However, a few statements will be prepared and made

• Begin working on "Grissom This Week" script, focusing on the realignment process and how it will roll out. (**See Supplement #11**)

• Begin desing of bimonthly newsletter to be sent to community and business leaders pertaining to the realignment process (**See Supplement #12**)

• Plan a publicity blitz for the Homeowners Assistance Program (HAP)

- Target: Military personnel owning homes in the surroundign communities
- Tools: Brochures and flyers
- Work with local realtors

• Meetings with local community and business leaders

- Brainstorm uses of Grissom upon conversion

## **March**

- News release
- Weekly column in *Pacesetter*
- Update recording
- Community Council dinner
- Revise and tape "Grissom This Week" with strong emphasis on closure process.  
Edit. Air for 1-2 weeks
- Have newsletter design and format ready for approval
  - If need to make changes, do so
  - When final format is approved, begin writing first issue. Keep in mind who the target audience is
- Develop mailing list for newsletters
- Develop a Quality Of Life Survey (**See Supplement #13**)
- Monitor HAP
- Form Task Force consisting of: (**See Supplement #14**)
  - Wing Commander
  - CARE officer
  - Public Affairs Chief
  - 434th Reserve Representative
  - GCRA Representative
  - School Superintendent
  - Representative from each of the three local Chambers of Commerce
  - Mayors -- Peru, Kokomo, Logansport
  - Media Representative
  - Civilian
  - Dependent

## April

- Set up a focus group with civilians, military personnel, dependents, and officials
  - Summarize and apply findings
  - The focus groups should be comprised on civilian and military citizens of surrounding communities, as well as of Grissom  
(See Supplement #15)
- News release
- Weekly column in *Pacesetter*
- Update recording
- Monthly Community Council dinner
- First newsletter to community leaders written, edited, approved, mailed
- Begin planning parent education program focusing on upcoming changes and how to make conversion process easier on children (See Supplement #16)
  - Arrange speaker from child psychology/mental health background
  - Reserve room/meeting place
  - Create flyers
  - Announcement in *Pacesetter*/ Channel 19
  - Write script
- Arrange a "speaking circuit" for Drinkhahn
  - local school system
  - community clubs and lodges
  - city council meeting
- Analyze results of Quality Of Life Survey
- Task force meeting
- Civilian Call where Drinkhahn will discuss the future of civilian jobs at Grissom and what aid is available to Civil Service employees (See Supplement #17)

## May

- Parent education program
  - Have feedback and evaluation forms ready
  - Record and analyze the programs success/needs
- News release
- Weekly column in *Pacesetter*

- Update recording
- Community Council dinner
- Begin research/design/writing of first brochure with coping tips/helpful hints
- Begin planning briefing for local dignitaries on conversion process
  - Speakers: Drinkhahn  
Lt. Col. Moran, CARE office
  - Send out invite letters
  - Plan and arrange refreshments/ room setup
- Visit the local school system and work with it on developing a program to deal with the conversion process and loss of students
- Contact United States and Indiana Congressmen and ask for their support during this time
- Task force meeting
- Monitor HAP

## June

- Briefing
  - Have Q-&-A ready
  - Have room set up
  - Agenda
  - Refreshments
  - Nametags
  - Evaluation sheets
- Newsletter
- News release
- Weekly column in *Pacesetter*
- Update recording
- Edit brochure. Ready for approval. Re-edits. Printed and made available to families.
- Community Council dinner

- "Grissom This Week" -- focus on conversion
- Update media list
- Task force meeting
- Keep in touch with government officials

## July

- News release
- Weekly column in *Pacesetter*
- Town meeting
  - Speaker: Drinkhahn
  - Publicize in *Pacesetter*, on Channel 19
  - flyers
  - Q-&-A
- Personnel will receive questionnaires asking them what they would like to see added/changed pertaining to the communication program (See Supplement #18)
- Update recording
- Monitor HAP
- Task force meeting

## August

- News release
- Weekly column in *Pacesetter*
- Update recording
- Community Council dinner
- Newsletter
- Plan, establish, and implement suggestion program solely focused on the conversion process
- Review questionnaires and implement any valid suggestions. Release results

- Work with local school system as necessary. Try to help ease them into fewer enrollment figures

- Task force meeting

- Keep in touch with government officials

## **September**

- "Grissom This Week" script

- Ensure suggestion program has been facilitated and is being utilized. Make sure feedback is provided in one manner or another

- News release

- Weekly column in *Pacesetter*

- Update recording

- Community Council dinner

- Draft and write letters to mayors/businesses. Approval. Mail

- Task force meeting

## **October**

- Newsletter

- News release

- Weekly column in *Pacesetter*

- Update recording

- Community Council dinner

- Begin designing/writing/editing brochure for families and how to best survive the conversion

- News conference to update media on process

- Plan, organize, and implement a monthly stress-busters meal open to all military personnel and their families

- Monitor HAP
- Task force meeting
- Keep in touch with government officials

## **November**

- Set up a focus group to evaluate programs already enacted and to test the new ideas
- Finish brochure. Approved. Printed. Available to families
- News release
- Weekly column in *Pacesetter*
- Update recording
- Community Council dinner
  - Drinkhahan is keynote speaker on the conversion and the future
  - Talking points
  - Q-&-A
- Evaluate and make any necessary adjustments in the suggestion program
- Task force meeting

## **December**

- End of the year evaluation of all programs
- Update media list
- Briefing for local dignitaries
- News release
- Letters to Congressmen/mayors/chambers of commerce apprising them of the situation
- Update recording
- Weekly column in *Pacesetter*



- Begin planning and designing of commemorative press kit for Grissom Air Force Base

- Begin desing for newsletter to take *Pacesetter's* place. Approved

- Task force meeting

## **Year 2 (1994 for Grissom)**

### **January**

- Release end-of-year evaluations pertaining to programs

- Make adjustments in programs according to evaluations

- Send personalized letters to Congressmen/chambers of commerce/local mayors

- Update recording

- News release

- "Grissom This Week"-- final program

- Biweekly newsletter to base residents

- Write, edit commemorative press kit

- Community Council dinner

- Work on brochure with coping tips for dependents

- Monitor HAP

- Keep in touch with government officials

- Task force meeting

### **February**

- News release

- Ensure suggestion program is still being utilized

- Biweekly newsletter

- Final edits of commemorative press kit
- Edit brochure. Print. Available to dependents.
- Update recording
- Task force meeting

## **March**

- Community Council dinner
- Q-and-A
  - The end is almost at hand so be ready for tough questions
- News release
- Biweekly newsletter
- Send press kits to printers after getting approval and making any final edits
- Prepare mailing list for press kits
- Briefing for local dignitaries
  - Drinkhahn's talking points
  - refreshments
  - invite letters
- Update recording
- Monitor HAP
- Task force meeting

## **April**

- News release
- Update recording
- Biweekly newsletter
- Get press kits from printer and distribute and make available to the public
- Stress-busters picnic for personnel and dependents

## **May**

- News release
- Biweekly newsletter to personnel/base residents
- Update recording
- Newsletter to community and business leaders
- Surveys to local businesses to evaluate information flow
- Base town meeting
  - Drinkhahn speaking
  - Flyers
  - Publicize in biweekly newsletter and on Channel 19
  - Q-and-A
  - Talking points

## **June**

- News release
- Biweekly newsletter to personnel
- Update recording
- Evaluate survey results from local businesses as well as from town meeting
- Phase down suggestion program
- Stress-busters picnic for military dependents/personnel
- Monitor HAP
- Task force meeting
- Communicate with government officials

## **July**

- News release
- Biweekly newsletter to personnel
- Update recording
- Final local dignitaries briefing
  - Speakers: Drinkhahn  
Moran
  - Talking points
  - Q-and-A
  - Refreshments
  - Room setup
- Final Community Council dinner with Grissom's attendance/participation

## **August**

- News release
- Update recording
- Biweekly newsletter for base personnel
- Begin "cleaning house" by mailing all records and files to Air Mobility Command Headquarters
- Massive one-on-one communication with personnel/dignitaries/families
- Communicate with government officials
- Have final decision made as to redevelopment of Grissom/contonement area

## **September**

- News release
- Update recording
- Last issue of the biweekly newsletter for base personnel
- Handle any last interviews and tours requested
- Final monitoring of the HAP
- Final task force meeting
- Last newsletter to local community and business leaders
- Evaluate the public relations program as a whole
- Finish "Cleaning House"
- Planning for ceremony changeover
  - Invite letters
  - Script
  - Q-and-A
  - Site, time, security

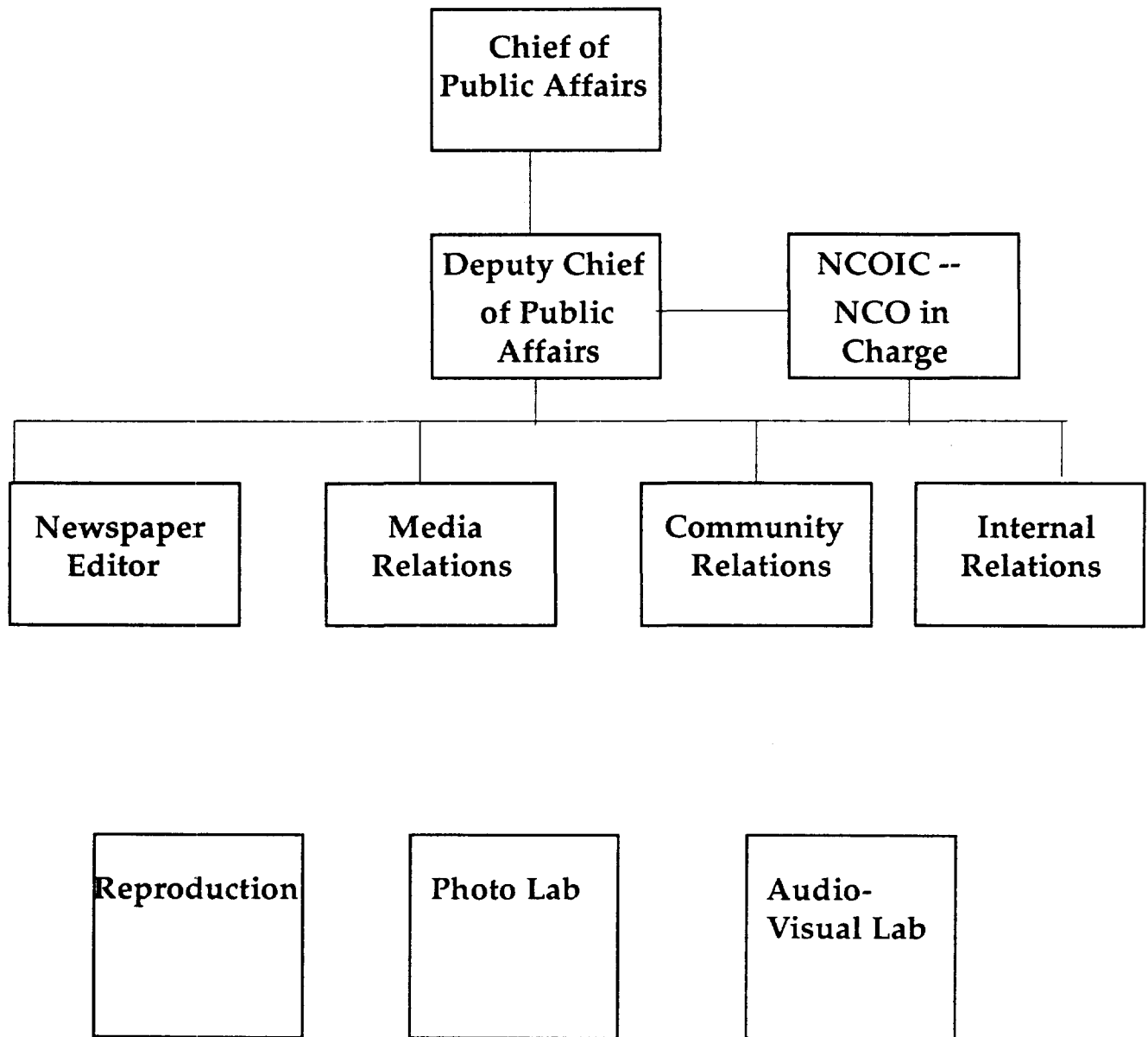
## **October**

- Tentative realignment of Grissom
- Ceremony for conversion from active duty to reserves
  - Open to media and the general public as well as military personnel/families
  - Drinkhahn and Col. John Batbie (Reserve commander) will speak and make the realignment official in a change of command ceremony
  - Commemorative press kits available
- Summary and final evaluation of the public relations program is made available to the public, media, and other military installations□

# Proactive Plan -- Addendum #1

Day-to-day responsibilities of a military Public Affairs Office -- NOT including those focused on the realignment/ conversion process

There are a vast array of duties a military Public Affairs Office is responsible for. The following diagram illustrates the basic setup of such an office.



Each section is responsible for individual duties which facilitate the communication process as a whole. The following is the breakdown of the responsibilities of each section:

#### **Chief and Deputy Chief of Public Affairs**

- The manager of the PA office
- Administrates and delegates duties to the sections
- Serves as liaison between the wing command section and the PA office
- Key contact officer
- Orchestrates special events, media plans, and serves as the chief editor of any written communication generated by the PA office

#### **NCOIC -- NonCommissioned Officer in Charge**

- Head supervisor of all NCOs in the office
- Steps in for chief and deputy chief when necessary
- Serves in editorial capacity
- Heads off any disagreements between personnel
- Key participant in special events programming

#### **Newspaper Editor**

- Responsible for generating information from the various offices on Grissom
- Responsible for coordinating photography and graphics as well as designing the layout
- Works with the *Peru Tribune*

#### **Media Relations**

- Writes and edits the script for "Grissom This Week," closed-circuit television show, as well as anchors it
- Writes and edits news releases and media advisories
- Clipping service pertaining to any newspaper articles about Grissom
- Handles any media inquiries
- Handles all news conferences and special events the media are invited to
- Maintains updated media list

#### **Community Relations**

- Responsible for handling base tours
- Community Council dinner coordinator (**See Addendum #2**)
- Coordinates all special events in which off-base/civilian people will attend
- Liaison between Community Council members and Grissom

#### **Internal Relations**

- Responsible for all inner-office communication
- Writes, edits, and produces the radio show, "Grissom Update"
- In charge of maintaining adequate office supplies

# Proactive Plan -- Addendum #2

## Role and Functions of the Grissom Public Affairs Office in the Community Council Dinners

- Working with the president of the Community Council in deciding:
  - where the dinner is to be held -- which community
  - who is the guest speaker
  - what the menu and cost to be paid by each Council member are
  - time and date
- Writing letters of invitation/RSVPs
- Receiving Col. Drinkhahn's approval of the letter of invitation
- Working with caterer to implement the menu
- Create and design name tags and table tents
- Establishing seating arrangement in order of protocol
- The room set-up -- ensuring all necessary equipment is available and functional
- Making sure bills are paid



# Evaluation

Evaluation is a vital element in the success of any public relations program. It is through evaluation that an organization can determine the effect of the implemented programs. Evaluation is the barometer by which all future activities and strategies can be measured.

As the realignment of Grissom Air Force Base looms on the horizon, a proactive public relations program is essential. However, for that proposed public relations program to fulfill its function, every strategy must be measured and evaluated.

The programs and strategies should be evaluated before, during, and after their implementation. As seen fit, adjustments should be made with the final goal of a free, two-way flow of communication in mind.

The evaluation of the public relations program for the realignment of Grissom can provide a road map to other military installations also facing realignment or closure. Without evaluation, there is no way of discovering whether or not the goals of open communication were achieved.

An evaluation checklist is a prime way to facilitate this stage of the program. A sample evaluation checklist follows.□

# Evaluation Checklists

## HOW TO EVALUATE REALIGNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS

- ☐ Establish and implement feedback from pertinent publics pertaining to all programs
- ☐ Utilize feedback as necessary
- ☐ Maintain records on each program and its feedback
- ☐ Report findings to management (Wing Commander)
- ☐ Maintain organized, up-to-date clipping service
- ☐ Keep accurate records of media inquiries
- ☐ Keep records/attendance/registration of people attending programs/seminars
- ☐ Continually review success of individual programs
- ☐ Act on findings/evaluation

# Summary

History has proven that, as time goes on, circumstances and, in turn, the information needs of society change. It is imperative that people receive information in time for them to process it and act on it. One aspect of the role of public relations is to provide that information to the pertinent publics.

As Grissom Air Force Base and other military installations respond to the decline for the need of such an extensive national security system, relations with the various pertinent publics are essential to maintaining beneficial circumstances for all parties involved. As time marches on, the needs of the people will change. However, the need to know and the need to have information will always exist. The free flow of information between the people and the administration is essential to success and growth in any organization or society.

A proactive public relations program is imperative in maintaining open communication between the base (or any organization) and its pertinent publics. America's military installations have provided much to society. It is an unfortunate fact that bases such as Grissom have been targeted for realignment or closure. However, the heritage of these installations can continue through proactive public relations.

This thesis contains a proposed public relations program which can serve as a guide for closing and realigning installations. There are many aspects to be considered in such a program due to the various complexities of the situation. The most important aspect of the proposed public relations program for Grissom's

realignment is two-way communication and proactive actions on behalf of the people by those in command.

As the needs for national security change the role and function of America's armed forces, it is important to remember the contributions the men and women in uniform have made to protecting democracy and freedom. It is of the utmost significance to supply these men and women, along with their families, with the pertinent information as soon as the situation warrants it. After all, these men and women at installations such as at Grissom Air Force Base have dedicated their lives to protecting the American Constitution. It is only right that, in turn, they receive the First Amendment rights of freedom of information they have risked their lives to protect.□

# Supplementary Material